

Arid Zone Monitoring Species Profile

Southern hairy-nosed wombat

Lasiorhinus latifrons

National status: Not listed

IUCN Red List: Near Threatened



Southern hairy-nosed wombat.

Key threats

- Disease (outbreaks of mange)
- Competition with introduced herbivores
- Habitat change from too much grazing by feral herbivores (livestock, rabbits)
- Climate change (changing rainfall, temperature, droughts)
- Vehicle strike

Animal Description

Southern hairy-nosed wombats are stocky and robust. They have stout, flattened claws for digging. Their short tail is hidden by silky, greyish or tan fur. They can reach lengths of over 90 cm, and they weigh 19 to 32 kg.

Habitat

The Southern hairy-nosed wombat lives in semi-arid shrublands and mallee woodlands in the southern edge of the deserts, from the Nullarbor to NSW.

Wombat scat

Southern hairy-nosed wombat scats are oval rather than cube-shaped like those of common wombats. They leave scats near their burrows, and create well-trodden paths to particular bushes which are their favourite toilet sites. The scats are shiny when fresh and are made up of plant material.



Image: Mike Swinbourne

Southern hairy-nosed wombat scats.



Image: Mike Swinbourne

Path created by Southern hairy-nosed wombat to a favourite toilet site.



Image: Mike Swinbourne

Southern hairy-nosed wombat scats around burrow.

Wombat tracks

A wombat's track is distinctive. Wombats have a slow, ambling gait and heavy flat-footed tread. They make both walking and bounding tracks.



Image: Daniela Parra

Common wombat foot (southern hairy-nosed wombat foot is similar).



Image: Mike Swinbourne

Southern hairy-nosed wombat walking tracks.

Burrows and warrens

Southern hairy-nosed wombats dig, and live in, warrens with many entrances. These warrens are shared by up to 10 individuals. The central warren is surrounded by a circle of small, simple burrows 100–150 m away.



Image: Mike Swinbourne

Southern hairy-nosed wombat tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).



Image: Mike Swinbourne

Southern hairy-nosed wombat burrow.

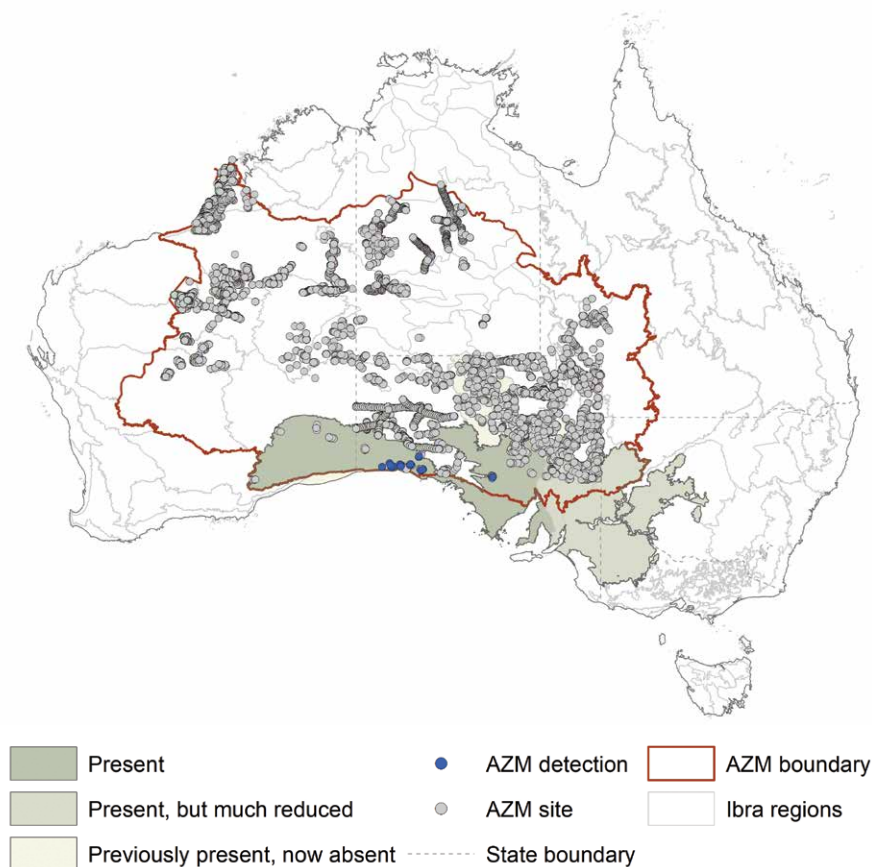
Things to think about when surveying for Southern hairy nosed wombat

- Survey during good conditions (in the early morning is best, not too windy or straight after rain).
- Organise to do surveys at regular times every year – for example, before the wet or hot season (October) and in the early dry season or early cool time (April).
- If you want to see changes over time, you will need to go back to the same areas to sample over several years. If you want to see if management actions (feral animal culling or fire) are working, you need to sample many different sites, before and after the action. You might need help from a scientist to make the sampling design strong.

Arid Zone Monitoring project findings

Southern hairy-nosed wombat distribution

The map summarises the detections in the AZM dataset. It shows that Southern hairy-nosed wombats were only detected along the southern edge of the AZM project area. Each blue dot shows a survey site where Southern hairy-nosed wombats were recorded. The grey dots show all the other sites that were surveyed, but where Southern hairy-nosed wombats were not recorded. Southern hairy-nosed wombats were detected at less than 1% of all surveys in the AZM dataset: of 15,000 site surveys, they were detected only 25 times. These records were made by Indigenous Ranger groups, land councils, NGOs, government agencies and university researchers. The information about the overall distribution in the map background is taken from the Mammal Action Plan¹. Southern hairy-nosed wombats are declining in the lighter shaded parts of its range.



The maps above show data shared by data providers with the AZM project. The data are from track and sign surveys. This method is great for detecting species that live in sandy deserts, but not as good for species that prefer rocky habitats, or species with distributions that are mostly outside the central deserts. The method also works best for larger-bodied animals with tracks that are easily identified.

It is possible that extra surveys have been carried out that have not yet been shared. If you see 'gaps' in the maps that you could fill by sharing your data, let us know.

Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:

<https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/arid-zone-monitoring-surveys-for-vertebrates-across-arid-and-semi-arid-zones>

References

¹ Woinarski, J.C.Z & Burbidge, A.A. & Harrison, P.L. (2014). The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012. (CSIRO Publishing: Melbourne.)



National Environmental Science Programme

This project received support from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

The Arid Zone Monitoring project is a collaboration between the NESP TSR Hub and over 30 Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations, 8 NGOs and NRM groups, 5 government agencies institutions, and many individual researchers and consultants. The project has gathered track and sign data from across Australia's deserts, using it to map the distributions of desert species and their threats. The national database includes almost 50,000 species presence records from over 5300 unique sites and almost 15,000 site visits, over the period from 1982 to 2020. The project area was defined by using IBRA subregional boundaries - the project boundary captures Australia's desert subregions where track and sign-based surveys are commonly used. The project showcases the collective work carried out by all groups working across the arid zone, and lays the groundwork for creating ongoing, national-scale monitoring for desert wildlife.

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